

# THE FAMILY CONNECTION

NEWS FROM THE TEXAS JUVENILE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

JANUARY 2018

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## From the Family Program



I would like to extend warm wishes and special blessings upon you and your family this New Year. I thank you for the opportunity to serve you and pledge to make your experiences satisfying as we partner with you in the coming year.

Since the very first issue of this family newsletter, there have been changes to our agency, our program and even our Family Liaison staff. However, as we continue to work with you, we

are excited to see the lives of our TJJD youth – **your** youth – changed because of **your** involvement.

You will see some small changes in this newsletter, too. One of these changes is a new column, “Parent to Parent”, in which parents and families of youth in our care share their TJJD experiences with other parents and families. I encourage you to share your stories. When we do that, it opens the door for others to share their stories. And that lets us know that we are not alone on this journey. When we share our story, it offers the opportunity for someone to help you, and for you to help someone else, even if you don’t know them. This allows us to help our children.

I also encourage you to participate in our 2018 TJJD Family Satisfaction Survey. This survey is available on-line at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Family2018> (English) or <https://es.surveymonkey.com/r/Family2018Spanish> (Spanish). The survey is also available in hard copy at the facilities, which you can pick up during visitation. If you complete a paper survey, just return it to the Family Liaison at your youth’s facility.

If there are any topics you would like us to cover in upcoming newsletters, please send your ideas! You can reach me by phone or e-mail: 512-490-7662 or [Suzanne.Scharle@tjjd.texas.gov](mailto:Suzanne.Scharle@tjjd.texas.gov). I look forward to hearing from you.

Suzanne  
Family and Community Program Supervisor



Tell us how we are doing at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Family2018> (English version)

# Your Texas Benefits

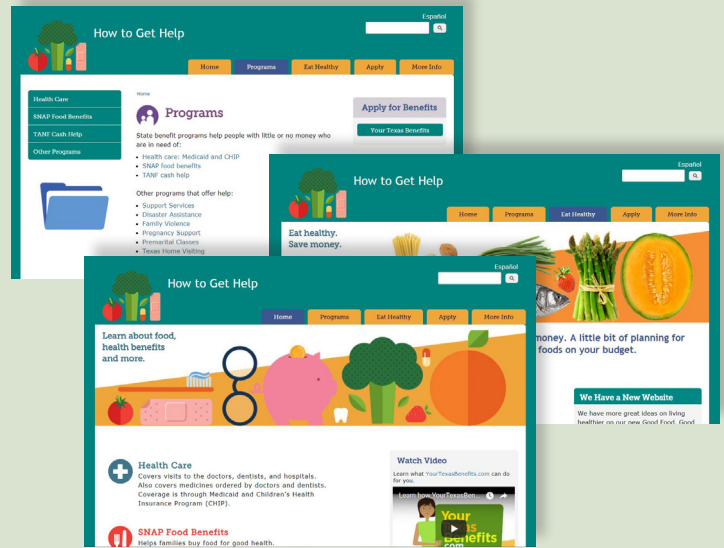
Did you know there is a one-stop shop for information about SNAP food benefits, Medicaid/CHIP, TANF financial assistance, and other available support services for families and individuals who are elderly, disabled, struggling with mental illness or drug and alcohol dependency? It's Your Texas Benefits and can be found on the internet at [www.yourtexasbenefits.hhsc.texas.gov](http://www.yourtexasbenefits.hhsc.texas.gov).

Created by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, **Your Texas Benefits** provides information about services available to you and your family. By answering some basic pre-screening questions, you can find out which benefits you may be eligible to receive. You can create an account to apply for benefits online or to request information about supportive services available to you. You can access information about how to find services in your area. Healthy eating information is also available; you can access information about meal planning, grocery shopping tips and even sample recipes for healthy meals.

***I was already receiving benefits for my child, but now he is TJJD care. What happens now?***

If you were receiving benefits for your child through the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) before he or she came into TJJD care, you may no longer be eligible to continue receiving them. It is for that reason that TJJD notifies those agencies upon your child's arrival.

Likewise, about 30 days prior to your child returning home,



TJJD will notify HHSC to assist in getting your child back on Medicaid so he or she can continue to receive any needed services when back in the community. During this process, TJJD staff may be following up with you to ensure that all required paperwork is completed before your child returns home.

If your child was receiving benefits through SSA, you will need to contact SSA directly in order to request a reinstatement of the benefits. TJJD will also notify SSA, but not until **after** your child returns home.

If you have any questions about **Your Texas Benefits** or your child's HHSC or SSA benefits, contact Judy McReynolds, Senior Title IV-E Program Specialist, Placement Services by phone 512-490-7983 or e-mail [Judy.McReynolds@tjjd.texas.gov](mailto:Judy.McReynolds@tjjd.texas.gov).

## What is a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) Meeting?

You may have heard of MDT meetings and may even have participated in a few, or you may be asking yourself "what exactly is the MDT and what do they do at these meetings?"

The Multi-Disciplinary Team consists of facility staff and other individuals who regularly interact with your child while he is in a TJJD facility. The MDT members review and assess each youth at least four times a month.

The MDT holds two types of reviews:

- Youth and Staff Reviews
- Comprehensive Reviews

During these meetings, the MDT reviews privileges and your child's progress in the program, conducts stages assessments, and reviews and develops goals for your child's individual case plan (ICP).

Your child, as well as his or her case manager, juvenile correctional officer, superintendent/assistant superintendent, and dorm supervisor regularly attend these meetings.



The case manager is required to invite you (parent/guardian) to each Comprehensive Review, which are held within the first 30 days of the youth's arrival at the facility from Orientation and Assessment, and then at least once every 90 days. The case manager will also invite other

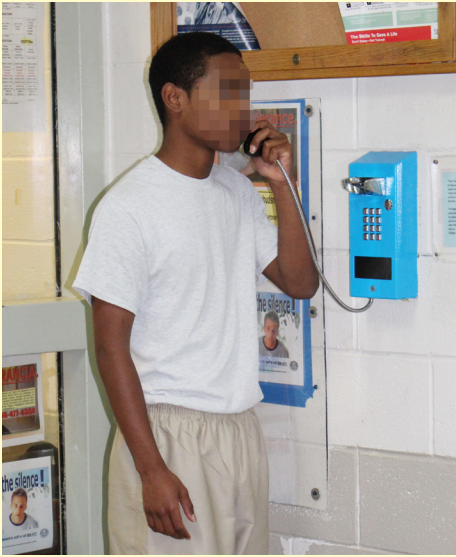
appropriate individuals, which may include a CPS caseworker if the youth has CPS involvement, parole officer, education department representative, and specialized treatment therapist or mental health provider.

We encourage you to participate in these MDT meetings – your input into your child's treatment and your understanding of his or her progress is not only your right as a parent, but is also critical for your child's success in TJJD. If you want to participate but are unable to attend in person, you may be able to call in by telephone – you can make these arrangements with your child's case manager. You can also ask your Family Liaison to represent you at the MDT meeting.

Please contact your Family Liaison if you have any questions.



# Family to Family



When my son was transferred to Brownwood for intake, I truly felt that the great state of Texas has kidnapped my 13 year old child. He was hundreds of miles away. I could not see him. I could talk to him and know that he was afraid and hungry. Did they understand how afraid and alone he felt? Would they keep him safe and warm? Did they understand about his health issues? Would he get enough to eat? Would anyone hug him and tell him that everything would be OK? We had just spent our first Thanksgiving and Christmas without being able to celebrate together. Would our family ever be "normal" again? My household had gone from a family of 4 to me. Extended family distanced themselves from us. After all, the news media had tried our case with their version of the story, and there was no avenue to correct the information that the public had in order to come to grips with what had happened. If this could happen to us, could it happen to them? What will people think? How will they be treated? Will people think there is something wrong with the family? Will people talk badly about my son and his family? Will people hate someone they never met? They have children and grandchildren. They have jobs, positions in the community, schools, and churches. They have busy lives. Unfortunately, we quickly became out of sight and out of mind. Their lives moved on.

TJJD has some amazing staff. Most are hardworking, dedicated, professional,

and caring. They understand that, regardless of the circumstances that landed the youth in the system, these are children...that made bad choices. Their future depends on every interaction the staff has with these juvenile offenders that we call our babies...our son or daughter, our children, our future. The Family Liaison is crucial to the flow of information from all the departments in the facilities to the families on the outside. They are our life-line.

For my family to be reunited in the free world and have a positive future is not just the staff's responsibility. I can participate in my child's education choices. I can keep in contact with the case manager and be aware of his progress, needs, behavior, goals, opportunities...and if he did something funny that they all laughed about. I can make sure my son knows he is loved by phone conversations, letters, visits, participation in MDT meetings, showing up for family day opportunities. The way I live my life now will impact the way he is received back to the community. I can support the staff by being co-operative and respectful and appreciate of the work they do and encourage my son to do the same.

To the other families, I would like to share what I have come to understand. The TJJD service is a constant work in progress. It is evolving every day. They design programs, policies, laws, rules, opportunities, education. Some of these have amazing results. Some fail terribly. Times, technology, education, budget, elected officials, youth population, all change frequently. Each change impacts the system that is in place. Feel like you wake up in a new world everyday? So do they. Fortunately, they don't give up. They constantly strive to promote what is working and find solutions to what didn't work. If you have a problem or complaint, be prepared to offer ideas or information that will make the situation better. Just because the answer was "No" today, does not mean the answer to the same question will be "No" next week or next month. Understanding this gives me hope.

In the next 2 years, I would like my

family to be reunited. I want to celebrate holidays and special life events together. I want my son to have a good job because of the opportunities for education and vocational training that TJJD made available to him. I want our family to be a positive example to the community of how adversity can make us stronger, kinder, better people. I want the power of forgiveness to be understood and utilized. What happened will not be forgotten, but it does not define us. I hope we can be the success story that drives future decisions made by TJJD that will impact the lives of other families that have suffered the consequences of bad choices made by a youth they love. I will be hugging my son as often as I want and telling him that I love him and I am proud of him. ~ Donna R.

## UPCOMING FAMILY DAY EVENTS

### **FEBRUARY 9:**

**Ron Jackson (Brownwood)**

For more information:

**Kevelle Bailey**

**325-641-4243**

**Kevelle.Bailey@tjjd.texas.gov**

### **FEBRUARY 9: Gainesville**

For more information:

**Robin Motley**

**940-665-0701 x268**

**Robin.Motley@tjjd.texas.gov**

### **FEBRUARY 16: McLennan (Mart)**

For more information:

**Mary Garrity**

**254-297-8301**

**Mary.Garrity@tjjd.texas.gov**

### **FEBRUARY 24: Evins**

For more information:

**Elva Benitez**

**956-289-5547**

**Elva.Benitez@tjjd.texas.gov**

**PLEASE CHECK WITH YOUR FAMILY LIAISON FOR FUTURE FAMILY DAY EVENTS!**

# The Role of the Chaplain in TJJD

The title “chaplain” has been around for centuries. Chaplain refers to a member of the clergy who represents a religious institution within the walls of a non-religious organization. Many organizations – including military, law enforcement, hospitals, and prisons – hire chaplains to provide spiritual guidance to staff, patients and inmates.

Each TJJD secured facility has a chaplain on staff, who serves youth of all religions. In fact, the chaplain may be the first religious individual that the youth meets when he or she arrives at TJJD. While your son or daughter is in a TJJD secured facility, the chaplain is available to assist them in their faith walk.

The chaplain completes your child’s initial religious preference assessment to determine which religious programs they may attend. He or she works with your youth with requests for religious accommodations. If your child is a minor, the chaplain will contact you (parent/guardian) for approval of the youth’s religious preference, or if your child wants to change something regarding his or her religious paperwork. Any religious material that you would like to send to your child must first go through the Chaplain’s Office for review.

The chaplain is often the first to respond if your child experiences the loss of a loved one. In addition to serving youth, the chaplains’ phone lines are always open to you with any concerns you may have or if a situation at home requires prayer.

To speak to a chaplain:

Evins	Chaplain Luis Alvarado	956-289-5567
Gainesville	Chaplain Dennis Banks	940-665-0701 x146
Giddings	Chaplain Frederick Horton	979-542-4607
Mart/McLennan	Chaplain Larrye Weaver	254-297-8212
Ron Jackson	Chaplain Rongey Madlock	325-641-4266
	Chaplain Rachel Ellington	325-641-4270

## A Virtual Way to Visit Your Child



Over the past few years, TJJD facilities have been scheduling visitation between youth and their families using computers and the internet. We realize that distance and cost may at times prevent you from visiting your child, so we have implemented a different way to visit. These “virtual visits” are scheduled directly by the

Family Liaison or your child’s case manager at each facility.

If you have a desk computer or laptop with a camera and internet service, or a phone with a camera and internet service, you can contact your Family Liaison to schedule a virtual visit. If you don’t already have access to Skype, FaceTime or WebEx, all you need to do is download the free applications of any of these to your device.

If you don’t have a computer/laptop or phone, your Family Liaison may be able to work with your child’s parole officer to set a convenient time in everyone’s schedule to host a virtual visit using TJJD equipment. You may need to go to one of the TJJD district offices to participate, if you choose this option.

We know the importance of family involvement, and want to continue to find ways to help you to support your child while he or she is in our care. If you have questions about virtual visits, or are ready to schedule a virtual visit, please contact your Family Liaison.

## Questions or Comments?

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940-665-0701 ext. 268

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254-297-8301

**MART RTC**  
Robin Black  
254-297-8246

**RON JACKSON**  
Kevelle Bailey  
325-641-4243

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COTTRELL HOUSE)  
Vickie White  
214-678-3600

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817-378-2127

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Sherrell Kivumbi  
713-942-4253

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